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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001010

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ISF GENERAL ON SECURITY SITUATION IN BAGHDAD

Classified By: Political Counselor Matthew H. Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (S) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: During a March 26 conversation, amid a crescendo of unrest in Baghdad, Major General Abdul Ameer, the Western Baghdad deputy commander and commanding general of the Iraqi Army Sixth Division, painted a bleak picture of the security situation. Abdul Ameer told several USG callers, including Baghdad ePRT 6 Leader John Bennett, that clashes in Basra had directly precipitated the deteriorating security environment in Baghdad. He implied that the Prime Minister had forced the start of military operations in Basra before the military was ready for them. With respect to northwestern Baghdad, EPRT team leader notes that Iraqi Army leaders appear to lack the capacity to respond effectively -- except with backing from Coalition Forces -- should Jaysh Al-Mahdi and its breakaway Special Group Criminals launch a concerted offensive, because the Iraqi Army's focus on manning check points has diminished the number of soldiers positioned to carry out military operations. Moreover, many of its soldiers remain loyal to militias, according to Abdul Ameer. We concur. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

BASRA OPERATIONS SURPRISE BAGHDAD IA COMMANDER

12. (S) "We were surprised at the initiation of (military) operations in Basra," Abdul Ameer said. "It came before we expected it." (COMMENT: Abdul Ameer clearly implied that the Prime Minister had forced the start of military operations in Basra before the military was ready or possibly believed the actions necessary. END COMMENT.) Noting that violence has spread to northwest Baghdad -- which includes Karkh, Mansour, and Kadhamiya districts -- Abdul Ameer expressed appreciation for the support that his Iraqi Army (IA) forces have received from Coalition Force (CF) units throughout the 2/101 BCT area of operations.

JAM, JAM, JAM -- AND NOT JUST SPECIAL GROUPS

13. (S) Approaching one of the wall maps in his office, Abdul Ameer pointed to all major areas of Baghdad and said, "Jaysh al-Mahdi, Jaysh al-Mahdi, Jaysh al-Mahdi," as he stabbed his forefinger on Sadr City, Kadhamiya, Shulla, and other neighborhoods, adding the same to the areas leading north and south from the capital. He stated that he believes security incidents in Baghdad, including military attacks March 25 - 26 against IA checkpoints and Coalition Forces, involved more than Special Group Criminals (SGCs): "They are main JAM as well." (NOTE: EPRT Leader does not fully share this opinion, although there are likely crossovers between some "regular" JAM and SGCs. END NOTE.) Worse, the general added, within the IA as well as the National Police and Iraqi Police, "The ranks are filled with JAM and Badr militia members, some who even turn on us during battles to change to

the side of their militia."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ABOUT ABDUL AMEER

¶4. (S) EPRT team leader notes that MG Abdul Ameer is one of the most energetic and highly articulate generals with whom 2/101 BCT and its ePRT have had contact. At 43, he is also one of the youngest generals, and reportedly a protege of Baghdad Operations Center (BOC) Commanding General Abud. Though Shia, he is adamant that sectarianism should play no role in the military -- and he has even challenged the civilian government on sectarianism. He said that his division is 96 percent Shia in an audible aside at a recent meeting co-chaired by General Abud and Implementation and Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation (IFCNR) luminary Dr. Bassima Al-Jadri. This comment indirectly challenged -- if she chose to hear -- Dr. Bassima's waxing on the need to keep "balance" in the numbers of the Sons of Iraq (formerly known as Concerned Local Citizens) being taken into the Iraqi Police. Without disputing the percentage, General Abud -- whom we believe views Abdul Ameer as a protégé -- cut Abdul Ameer off by saying that IA numbers were not under discussion.

¶5. (S) While highly anti-militia, from our reading of Abdul Ameer, he appears to worry that the Basra foray against the Sadrists is a largely political decision of the Prime Minister taken before the military was ready, and indeed perhaps before non-military options had been exhausting. In general, Abdul Ameer maintains that the IA is "significantly infiltrated" by both JAM and Badr militias.

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COMMENT: THE IA HAS LIMITED CAPACITY FOR
OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN BAGHDAD

¶6. (S) Abdul Ameer has been attempting to wean the IA off its focus on the check points that abound in northwest Baghdad's Karkh, Mansour and Kadhamiya districts. The EPRT team leader has observed Ameer chairing joint security meetings among IA, IP, NP, and CF, where he has consistently pushed for a reduction in the number of traffic check points. Indeed, the IA in northwest Baghdad is largely a "check-point army" with little additional force for maneuver operations. The 2/101 BCT estimates that the IA in northwest Baghdad contains approximately 8,000 soldiers. At any given time, the BCT assesses that only about 4,000 soldiers are available; of that 4,000, some 3,000 are tied down in check-point operations. Subtracting those who fill headquarters and personal security details, only about 500 soldiers remain available for maneuver operations, including patrols or task forces that could be used against a concerted SGC/JAM take-down of check-points, particularly simultaneous multiple attacks such as the capital is currently experiencing. Thus, the small numbers of soldiers -- and the soldiers' commitments to militias -- do not leave much room for IA leadership at the division level and below to launch a counter-offensive should there be a concerted JAM or SGC offensive in northwest Baghdad, except with concerted backing from Coalition Forces.

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